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Wednesday, June 8, 2016

In Case You Missed it. Most Widely Read News Item this Week.

2017 Federal Pay Raise Set by Silence

A House subcommittee has approved that measure, which by remaining silent on a January 2017 federal employee raise effectively paves the way for one to be paid by default. More at <http://www.fedweek.com/fedweek/acceptance-raise-default-appears-set/>

Approval Near in Senate on Buyout, Veterans Preference Changes

The Senate expects to finish voting this week on a DoD bill (S-2943) containing significant changes in several federal employee policies, shifting the focus to an upcoming conference with the House—which previously passed its own version of the bill without those provisions. Read at <http://www.fedweek.com/fedweek/approval-near-senate-buyout-veterans-preference-changes/>

White House Silent on Some Issues, Objects on Others

The Obama administration has issued a statement opposing several provisions of the bill, although the veterans preference changes were not among them. Instead, the White House objected to language that would: impose new restrictions on the size of the civilian and contracted services workforces for headquarters functions, saying that a downsizing already is underway; impose an across the board reduction in SES position of 25 percent over three years, saying any such reduction should be targeted; and transfer responsibility for personnel background and security investigations of DoD personnel from OPM to DoD, saying it would undermine a reform already underway to set up a new entity within OPM to perform background checks while DoD would maintain and protect the data. The administration meanwhile recommended extending government-wide several changes that would apply only at DoD, including expanding authority to “direct hire” certain students and recent graduates, and broadening rights of temporary and term employees to compete for permanent positions. “Hiring and recruitment flexibilities provided in these provisions would be extremely valuable for all federal agencies, and would enable government-wide improvements to help meet federal workforce needs,” it said.

Several Provisions Could Impact Federal and Contracted Jobs

The White House also opposes language that would repeal the longstanding moratorium on “Circular A-76” studies comparing in-house costs to contractor bids for commercial-type work—which often have resulted in federal jobs being contracted out.

Personnel Provisions in Senate DoD Bill Explained

A Senate committee report explains the provisions affecting civilian employees in the annual DoD authorization bill there, some of them affecting only DoD employees but others applying government-wide. For a closer look, go to <http://www.fedweek.com/issue-briefs/personnel-provisions-senate-dod-bill-explained/>.

Panel to Advance Bill Allowing Raise, Setting Policies

The House Appropriations Committee is set to vote tomorrow (June 9) on the general government appropriations bill, the key annual spending measure for federal employees. The measure, like its three predecessors, says nothing about a raise for the following January, in effect clearing the way for one to take effect by default. The figure almost certainly would be the 1.6 percent the White House recommended earlier this year, most likely with a locality pay carve-out that would yield raises ranging from slightly above to slightly below that figure. The measure also funds the central management agencies such as OPM and GSA, financial regulatory agencies, and the IRS. That agency's budget especially would remain tight, although money would be diverted toward improving customer service, while GSA's construction budget also would be tightened, in part to spur more closing or consolidating of excess facilities. Also, money for the ongoing IT upgrade of OPM's computer systems in the wake of the thefts from its personnel and background investigation databases would be withheld until OPM produced a detailed report on the project, including expected long-term costs. OPM's inspector general recently issued the latest in a series of reports questioning the management of that project, including what it considers incomplete—and thus probably understated—cost projections. The bill also continues several long-standing policy restrictions such as a ban on training not directly related to a federal employee's duties, while adding a new provision barring the IRS from paying awards unless the employee's conduct and personal tax compliance are considered.

Expert's View: Eligibility for Medicare Part A and Social Security

CSRS employees become eligible for Medicare Part A but whether they are eligible for a Social Security benefit depends on their work experience, writes benefits expert Reg Jones. You'll find his column at <http://www.fedweek.com/uncategorized/eligibility-medicare-part-social-security/>

OPM Outlines Terms of Disabled Veterans Leave

OPM has proposed rules spelling out a new “disabled veteran leave” entitlement enacted into law late last year, stressing that under the law, it will be available only to eligible those who are first hired, or rehired after a break in service for military duty, on or after November 5 of this year. The law allows for up to 104 hours of leave in the first 12 months of employment without charge to other forms of leave for newly hired veterans with a disability rating of 30 percent or more, to be used for medical treatment related to that disability and for which sick leave could otherwise be used. The leave will not carry over beyond that period and will be prorated for employees on other than a full-time schedule. The proposed rules address issues such as the documentation needed to qualify for the leave, loss of eligibility for those deemed to have recovered, and other technical issues. The rule proposal in the June 6 Federal Register also would repeal several temporary special leave authorities that have expired, including one dating to 1991.

Senate Bill Would Expand Law Officer Retirement

Legislation (S-2946) offered in the Senate would expand the special retirement provisions for law enforcement officers to certain categories who currently are ineligible, bringing an estimated 30,000 more officers under those provisions. Law enforcement officers pay more into the federal retirement fund but receive enhanced benefits with eligibility to retire earlier—although generally subject to mandatory retirement at 57. The bill would include all GS-0083 officers in the coverage, specifically extending it to employees who are authorized to carry a firearm and whose duties include the investigation and/or apprehension of suspected criminals; IRS employees whose duties are primarily the collection delinquent taxes and securing delinquent returns; employees of the Postal Inspection Service; VA police officers; and officers of a variety of other agencies including NIH and the U.S. Mint currently excluded. Under the

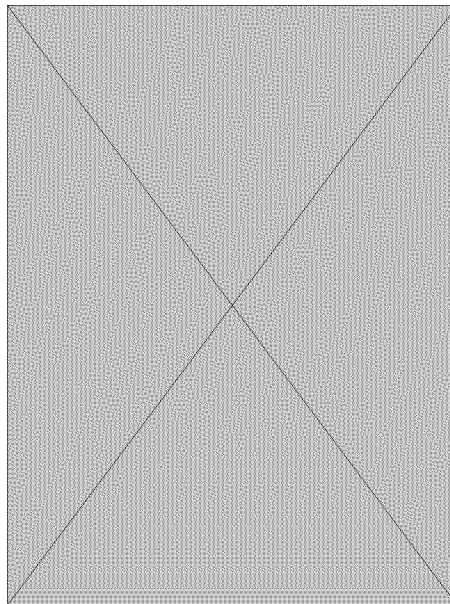
bill, service prior to the change would be treated as having been under those provisions at the employee's election.

House Backs Wider Job Competition Rights for Some Temps

The House has passed HR-4906, to clarify a law enacted last year regarding temporary or seasonal employees of land management agencies such as wildland firefighters. OPM has interpreted that law as entitling them, if they meet the law's qualifications, to compete for permanent jobs under internal agency merit promotion procedures on the same basis as employees already in permanent positions—but only within their own agency. Sponsors argue that the original change was meant to apply to vacancies in all agencies. The law was a response to situations in which employees build up years of total service under a string of temporary appointments but are not eligible to compete for vacant permanent positions under internal merit promotion procedures.

Important Changes to Your FERS Benefits for 2017

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Our 2017 FERS Retirement Planning Guide was written and edited by our veteran-team of federal retirement planning experts in the field with over 49 years experience.

Here are some of the key features and updates in this all-new Retirement Planning Guide:

- Eligibility Requirements to Retire
- How to Compute Your Retirement Benefits
- CSRS Components and Potential Reductions in Annuity
- Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs)
- Social Security Benefits
- Thrift Savings Plan
- FEHB, Federal Dental & Vision Program
- Medicare, Life Insurance, Long-Term Care Insurance
- Buyouts, Workers' Compensation
- Retirement Misenrollments, Common Errors and Self Identification Test
- How to Plan for Your Retirement
- The Application Process
- Taxes in Retirement: Federal and State Taxes
- Survivor Benefits, Spousal Annuities, Children Annuities
- Early Retirement: Early-Out, Will You and Should You Take the Offer?
- Leaving Before Retirement Eligibility: All Your Options
- Going Back to Work for the Government
- Life Events in Retirement: Moving, Divorce, Marry, Have Children, etc.
- Questions and Answers Section
- Useful Phone Numbers, Addresses and Other Services

More of what this all-new guide includes...

1. **Eligibility Requirements to Retire**
2. **How to Compute Your Retirement Benefits**
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